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Cash Machines for the Poor

Access to basic banking services for the poor is weak at the best of times. Many are openly discriminated against as a ?bad risk? by banks, and denied the sort of banking services middle and higher income people take for granted. Yet it is a myth that the poor do not have money or do not wish to save and invest for their future or for business.

The so-called Bottom of the Pyramid (BOP) - the four billion people around the world who live on less than US \$2 a day - are being targeted by a wide range of businesses. Indian business consultant and professor $\underline{\mathsf{CK}}$ $\underline{\mathsf{Prahalad}}$, the man who coined the term BOP, has gone so far as to claim this is a market potentially worth US \$13 trillion, while the World Resources Institute puts it at US \$5 trillion in its report, $\underline{\mathsf{The}}$ $\underline{\mathsf{Next}}$ 4 $\underline{\mathsf{Billion}}$.

And contrary to popular perception, the poor do have buying power, as has been documented by Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MT) professors Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo in their paper "The Economic Lives of the Poor". Surveying 13 countries, they found those living on less than a dollar a day, the very poor, actually spent 1/3 of their household income on things other than food, including tobacco, alcohol, weddings, funerals, religious festivals, radios and TVs. The researchers also found that the poor increasingly used their spending power to seek out private sector options when the public sector failed to provide adequate services

India, where 63 percent of the BoP market is rural and 304.11 million people are illiterate (Human Development Report), makes for a particularly tricky market to reach with bank machines: the average transaction is just 100 rupees (£1.25).

But a Madras-based company has come up with the Gramateller - a low-cost, blue-and-white bank machine custom-designed for the poor and illiterate. <u>Vortex</u> received funding of 2 million rupees (US \$48,000) from an investment company, <u>Aavishkar</u>, that specializes in micro-venture capital -- small sums for new business ideas. The advantage of micro-venture capital funding is its longer payback time: a young company does not get driven out of business by having to pay back the cash before the idea has been realized. Normally, venture capital helps a business to grow quickly but the venture capitalist wants to see an immediate profit on the investment.

Vortex's chief executive officer, V.Vijay Babu, said: "The idea was conceived by Prof. Jhunjhunwala of <u>IITM (Indian Institute of Technology Madras)</u> in the course of an exploratory project focused on using ICT to deliver modern banking services to rural India."

"It was found that branch-based banking is too expensive to be extended to remote rural locations where the volume and size of transactions are small. Using conventional ATMs (automatic teller machines) as a channel posed many difficulties because these ATMs were not built to operate in [illiterate] environments. Hence the need for developing an ATMs pecific to this context."

Costing just a 10th as much to build as an ordinary cash machine, Gramateller has a fingerprint scanner for the illiterate, and is able to accept dirty and crumpled bank notes. Vortex came up with an ingenious solution to do this, said Babu: "Vortex developed a beltless dispenser design that in many ways mimics the way a human teller would pick and count notes."

Vortex hopes to massively expand access to cash machines: at present, India has just 30,000 machines, or one for every 43,000 people (the US has a machine for every 1,000 people). These machines are being piloted with India's biggest private bank, ICICI, and they have garnered interest from Indonesian banks as well.

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What are these?

"We are running pilots for two leading banks with about 10 ATMs," said Babu. "Though it is still early, the initial response has been very encouraging - rural users find fingerprint authentication intuitive and simple and the ATM convenient and easy to use. Afew users also gave feedback that our ATMs look less intimidating, maybe because it is placed in a non-air conditioned room with easy access and also is different in shape from a typical ATM."

Furthermore the cash machines have taken a beating to see if they are robust enough for rural India: "The ATMs were tested for extended operating cycles under the harshest of environments that would prevail in the rural context — using soiled currencies, operating in non-air conditioned and dusty environments, subjecting the machine to typical fluctuations in line voltages and power outages. User-acceptance was tested by enlisting the participation of rural and semi-urban people to carry out test transactions."

As for thieves getting their hands on the cash before the poor, Vortex maintains the machines will not become the victim of thieves: each machine will only carry a fifth of the money of city-dwelling bank machines.

Elsewhere in the South, a South African research and analysis company BM-TechKnowledge (http://www.bmi-t.co.za/) in its latest report identifies a boom in banking services across Africa. In particular, South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Angola, Mauritius, Tanzania, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Egypt and Morocco - all have seen surges in profit and services as a result of improving banking regulations and political conditions. Maybe future markets for the Gramateller to reach Africa's poor lie ahead?

LINKS:

 Unleashing India's Innovation: Toward Sustainable and Inclusive Growth, a report by the World Bank.

Website: web.worldbank.org

xigi.net (pronounced 'ziggy' as in zeitgeist) is a space for making connections and gathering intelligence within the capital market that invests in good. It's a social network, tool provider, and online platform for tracking the nature and amount of investment activity in this emerging market also referred to as blended value investing. xigi's goal is to help this international emerging market to grow through market formation activities that guide and educate a growing wave of new money, while connecting it to the emergent entrepreneurs and deals on the internet.

Website: http://www.xigi.net/

The new report Global Savings, Assets and Financial Inclusion by the Citi
Foundation is packed with innovative approaches that are allowing the BoP
(bottom of the pyramid) to use their income to build assets and more
sustainable livelihoods.

Website: http://www.newamerica.net

 NextBillion.net: Hosted by the World Resources Institute, it identifies sustainable business models that address the needs of the world's poorest citizens

Websites: http://www.nextbill	ion.net/ and	World	Resources	Insitute

Milk Co-operatives Help Hungry Haiti

The global food crisis has hit the impoverished Caribbean country of Haiti especially hard. Already suffering from decades of food crises brought on by the collapse of domestic farming, the country has become notorious for its people being reduced to eating cakes made of mud to stave off hunger pains. It is the poorest country of Latin America and the Caribbean and one of the poorest in the world.

Haiti imports some 52 percent of its food, including over 80 percent of its rice. Local food production only covers 43 percent of the country's demand and food aid supplies only 5 percent of its needs. Of the estimated 9.8 million Haitians, 5.1 million live on less than US \$1 a day and 7.6 million on less than US \$2 a day. At current prices, one dollar buys only half a meal per day (Source: United Nations Country Team in Haiti).

Haiti's problems are made worse by a global food crisis. So-called agflation (agricultural inflation) has seen spiralling food prices around the world, which in turn are causing food shortages, hunger and malnutrition. On international commodity markets, food prices have gone up 54 percent over the last year, with cereal prices soaring 92 percent (FAO - World Food

Situation). U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has called for food production to increase 50 percent by 2030 just to meet rising demand - and right now there are 862 million people worldwide who are undernourished (FAO).

In Haiti, most agriculture is done on a small scale by about 700,000 family farmers. Few belong to any production association or mechanism to market and distribute their products, and local produce has been pushed out of the market by imports.

Subsidized U.S. rice began flooding in 30 years ago, becoming so cheap that Haitians began eating it instead of the corn, sweet potatoes, cassava and domestic rice they grew. The U.S. imports drove rice farmers out of business and incited a rural exodus that swelled the slums of the capital, Port-au-Prince. That dependence on imports has caused dangerous food insecurity. Today, the U.S. rice that is the staple of many Haitians' diet has doubled in price in little more than a year.

"The problem is that Haiti doesn't have the land to give every peasant family enough to allow them to make a living," said Bernard Etheart, head of the National Institute for Agrarian Reform. Etheart estimates that if all arable land was planted, each farmer would have no more than half a hectare, or 1.25 acres.

Accoperative of dairy farmers is doing its bit to revive domestic production of milk products and reduce the crippling costs of importing milk for Haiti. Importing 85,000 tonnes of milk from Europe and the United States costs Haiti US \$40 million a year. A walk through the capital, Port-au-Prince, will reveal how much milk is imported in one form or another: tiny cans of evaporated milk are sold in the street markets, while the wealthy can buy powdered and long-life milk in the air conditioned supermarkets of the upscale neighbourhood of Petionville.

Dairy production in Haiti was in decline for 20 years until, in 2002, the country ceased to produce any milk at all. The urgent need for milk in Haiti is shown in the average consumption: per child, only 110 ml is consumed per day. In Uruguay, for example, it is 520 ml a day (190 litres per head of population per year).

<u>Lèt Agogo (Creole for Unlimited MIk)</u> is a cooperative using small-scale farmers to bring milk to the hungry. Founded by the NGO Veterimed six years ago, it now has a network of 13 dairies across the island.

Lèt Agogo is hoping to get Haiti's milk production up to 145,000 tons a year from the current 45,000 tons. So far, the product's single biggest client is the Haitian government. It buys bottles of sterilized milk below cost and distributes them to 130,000 school children in 44 government-funded schools. Dr. Michel Chancy told the Mami Herald that the government would like to expand the distribution to 800 schools.

"Haiti is a country where we consume a lot of milk," said Chancy, a veterinarian and one of the visionaries behind Lèt Agogo.
``After rice, milk is the second-largest import."

At present, Haiti has 500,000 dairy cows out of more than a million head of cattle. The problem came down to marketing and distributing the dairy products. With no structure in place, few farmers bothered milking their animals. But by the end of 2007, 600 farmers had joined the network and 400 producers in dairy product making and grass pasture management. In 2007, they turned 540,000 litres into yoghurt and sterilised milk that can stay on the shelf for six to nine months without refrigeration. Made from sterilized milk, the yogurt comes in 280 ml bottles and sells in stores throughout the country and has a shelf life of nine months.

The farmers have seen their income almost double, from 4 (US 10 cents) to 8 (US 20 cents) gourdes per litre, from 10 (US 25 cents) to 12 (US 30 cents) gourdes per litre.

Farmers walk to processing centres with their litres of milk and receive US \$2.20 for each US gallon (4.55 litres).

"The milk is here," Chancy said, but the lack of roads and electricity in the country pose huge challenges. "The problem is transporting it."

Haiti's president, Rene Preval, has cited Lèt Agogo as an excellent example of how Haiti can recover its domestic food production capability. The scheme won a US \$10,000 first prize in the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean Experiences in Social Innovation Award.

Lèt Agogo believes it will take 100 dairies throughout Haiti's rugged terrain to truly take over the import market, and would cost US \$10 million to set up. "Normally in five to ten years, a dairy would pay for itself. But you need the investments," Chancy said.

"It's not the production of milk that is important here... It's accomplishing it together," said Philippe Mathieu, from Oxfam International in Quebec, Canada, who is working on helping the brand produce cheese, noting that Haiti is at a difficult crossroads with today's global price hikes. "The goal is to show Haitians there is a way to do things — a way to construct something collectively.

"Haitian peasants have always taken care of their cattle; tying them, feeding them and giving them water to drink," Mathieu said. "The cow has always been their bank book, something they could sell for money during hard times. Now it has become a revenue source for them."

LINKS:

- Aseries of videos showing how Lèt Agogo works.
 Website: http://www.veterimed.org.ht/
- An interactive map showing how the world food crisis is affecting countries.

Website: http://www.ft.com

- The Tiviski Dairy in Mauritania is Africa's first camel milk dairy helping semi-nomadic herders.
 Website: http://www.growinginclusivemarkets.org
- Growing Inclusive Markets, a new web portal from UNDP packed with case studies, heat maps and strategies on how to use markets to help the poor.

Website: http://www.growinginclusivemarkets.org/

Traditional Healers can Heal the Mind, as well as Body

Mental healthcare is critical to physical health and overall wellbeing, yet it is seriously neglected around the world - and especially in poorer countries.

Often seen as a luxury for the wealthy or an indulgence for the weak, mental health services are often left at the bottom of any list of development priorities. Yet Professor Martin Prince of King's College London in the United Kingdom found that an estimated 14 percent of the global burden of disease is due to neuropsychiatric disorders, mostly depression, alcohol- and substance-use disorders, and psychoses.

Since the contribution of mental disorders to physical illness is inadequately appreciated, the actual global burden of mental disorders is probably higher than this. Dr. Shekhar Saxena of the World Health Organization has reported that a scarcity of resources for mental health scarce is compounded by inequities and inefficiencies in the delivery of mental health care.

As a result, people who need care get none. "The treatment gap - the proportion of those who need but do not receive care is too high for some mental disorders," Saxena said. As many as one in three people with schizophrenia and one in two with other mental disorders do not receive any treatment. The WHO has reported that the treatment gap for serious disorders is 76 percent to 85 percent for low- and middle-income countries. And the organization says shortages of healthcare professionals have been shown to be the main limiting factor in delivering mental healthcare in most low- and middle-income countries.

But an ingenious solution to this problem has emerged in the South American country of Ecuador. It involves turning to the traditional healers who are already well-established in communities. They are both cheaper and faster than waiting for medical psychiatrists to turn up in poor communities, and they can start right now to provide the support people need in a culturally tolerant way. Their effectiveness has been proven by Dr. Mario Incayawar, director of the Runajambi Institute for the Study of Quichua Culture and Health in Otavalo.

"Poor countries where you find numerous traditional healers could benefit the most," he said.

In findings published in the prestigious British Journal of Psychiatry (The British Journal of Psychiatry (2008) 192: 390-391. doi: 10.1192/bjp.bp.107.046938), Incayawar found there are just 800 psychiatrists in Ecuador, and most live in the cities and speak Spanish. The native population on the other hand, mostly speak the local Quechua language and are served by only one psychiatrist, but thousands of traditional healers.

In the <u>Andean mountain city of Otavalo</u>, most people are descendents of the ancient Inca people. Health conditions are poor and far worse than in Spanish-speaking regions. Over 3 million of Ecuador's 12 million residents speak Quechua, many of them living in indigenous communities high up in the mountains, bypassed by development. Roughly 90 percent of indigenous communities live below the poverty level, a fact reflected in high maternal and infant mortality rates. In some remote communities, maternal mortality reaches 250 deaths per 100,000 live births, compared to the national average of 130, and one in 10 infants does not live to see his or her first birthday.

For 5 million Indigenous people in Ecuador, for example, there is not one single mental professional paid to work within the Indigenous communities.

Traditional healers' practices are widespread around the world, yet their diagnostic skills have rarely been investigated. Incayawar's study found the yachactaitas (Quichua healers) in the Andes were able to identify cases of psychiatric illness in their communities. During the study over 18 months, 10 yachactaitas participated in the identification of 50 individuals with a condition. None of the participants was found to be healthy in biomedical or psychiatric terms when reviewed by psychiatrists. The results suggest yachactaitas can be an early warning system for identifying general psychiatric cases in their communities through their powers of observation.

"From the Quichua perspective, it is a matter of common sense," said Incayawar. "We have a sizable number of traditional healers, why not promote their clinical skills for taking care of our communities."

"Healers are paid in cash or by gifts such as a bag of potatoes, a basket of eggs, or a couple of chickens. The Quichua people are not familiar with psychiatrists or mental health professionals."

He also sees a bright future for the role of the traditional healer: "Young people feel less threatened to pursue a career as a traditional healer. Currently, the trend points to an increase of traditional healers."

In the future, Incayawar would like to see a happy co-habitation between the scientifically-trained psychiatrists, and the traditional healers: "We would like to see traditional healers working in a respectful partnership with biomedically trained mental health workers. The collaboration between equals ... could be something to work on for the coming decade."

LINKS:

 Dr Mario Incayawar has new book coming out in February 2009 called "Psychiatrists and Traditional Healers: Unwitting Partners in Global Mental Health," Publisher: John Wiley & Sons.

It can be pre-ordered here: Amazon.co.uk

Website: http://www.unfpa.org

 An innovative UNFPAproject has managed to give the Quecha-speaking descendents of the Incas the benefits of both traditional and modern medicines in a culturally sensitive manner.

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Fashion Recycling: How Southern Designers are Re-using and Making Money

With the rising awareness of the importance of doing fashion in an ethical and sustainable way, more and more fashion designers in the South are getting very creative. Fashion earns big money around the world: The global clothing industry is estimated to be worth US \$900 billion a year.

In Paris, the Ethical Fashion Show, now in its fifth year, showcases fashion that respects people and the environment while still being glamorous, luxurious and trendy. It has attracted designers from around the world, including Mongolia, Thailand, China, Peru and Bolivia. The show demands that all participants adhere to International Labour Organization conventions - including banning forced and child labour - respect for the environment, creating local employment and working with craftspeople to ensure skills are retained and the fashion reflects the diversity of the world's cultures.

In Abidjan, Ivory Coast, Felicite Mai is using pride in her nation's top export commodity, cocoa (Ivory Coast is the world's number one exporter of cocoa), to make smart fashion wear at affordable prices. She has turned the beige-coloured jute sacks used to ship cocoa beans around the world into clothes for men and women.

"Ivory Coast's economy is based on agriculture, especially cocoa and coffee. So I decided to promote these crops by creating these fashion designs," Mai, whose real name is Maimouna Camara Gomet, told the Reuters news agency.

"For me, it's a way of drawing the whole world's attention to cocoa and coffee," she said

Mai comes from a family of cocoa planters and is a graduate of a sewing school. She works out of a studio-cum-shop in the Treichville suburb of Abidjan.

The clothes are usually beige, but some are dyed dark brown or blue. They include skirts, tops, trousers, shirts, waistcoats, caps, bags and accessories; she gets the sacks - most emblazoned with "Product of Ivory Coast, Cocoa" -- from the citys port warehouses. She cleans the jute cloth first, before creating the fashions.

"I had this idea from when I was still at sewing school in 1987. Then I opened my own workshop in 1996 and I first launched these kind of designs in 2003 during a fashion contest at Divo (in the south of Ivory Coast)" said Mai, who has several assistants at her shop.

She has been able to attract as clients local celebrities, artists and musicians and even a few from abroad.

In Brazil, it is footwear that is getting the recycled-look treatment. The brand Melissa specializes in plastic shoes that are ecofriendly and made from 100 percent recycled materials. They use a plastic called melflex made from recovered plastic. The shoes are made in injection molds and the factory is so efficient, it has next to no waste as a byproduct. It recycles all the waste and water used in the production process. And as a plus, they make a point of paying the workers well, and supporting social and environmental causes in Brazil.

Their secret to putting zing into recycled plastic shoes is to have high-profile, celebrity designers design some of the shoes. So far, they have had UK fashion mistress Vivienne Westwood, the Campana Brothers, and the UK-based, Iraqi-born architect Zaha Hadid. Hadid is a controversial figure who always stirs up debate, and her rubber shoes have brought attention to the brand.

The Chilean studio Modulab has turned to recycled rubber from the car industry to make bags. The rubber comes in sheets so it is easy to cut and shape into bags, thus reducing the amount of time and energy used to make the bags. The line is called RTA (ready to assemble) and includes three types of bags: an envelope, a handbag and a messenger bag. Each sheet of recycled rubber comes with the specific slots and pins for the consumer to put the bag together at home, without any glue or sewing involved. Energy used in the making of the entire bag is 100 percent human, except in the production of the material itself.

In Ghana, the cheeky Ghanaian businessman-cum-fashion designer Kwabena Osei Bonsu wanted to do something about the ubiquitous plastic bags that pollute the landscape of the capital, Accra.

In Accra, a small city of 2.2 million people, up to 60 tons of plastic packaging is dumped on the streets every day, a figure that has risen by 70 per cent over the past decade.

"I wanted to come up with an idea that would solve problems in my lifetime," he said to the Independent.

He came up with the brilliantly simple solution of turning these wasted and damaging plastic bags back into usable and fashionable carryalls and handbags. He collects the plastic sacks and stitches them back together. The business, <u>Trashy Bags</u>, employs a dozen tailors and seamstresses. Launched in December last year, it so far has collected 10 million used plastic sachets from the streets, and sold more than 6,000 bags. Handbags go for US \$7.79.

Ghana's huge quantity of discarded plastic water bottles are gathered up for recycling too. A storage room overflows with more than 3 million sachets that have been collected and cleaned ready for recycling.

Bonsu's business has turned into a source of income for local people, who receive US \$3.89 for 1,000 sachets - a good return where the average yearly income is US \$495

"I collect sachets because I am jobless and this gives me money," said Hadiza Ishmael, a 55-year-old grandmother who has delivered 4,000 plastic bags. "It also makes the place look nicer."

LINKS:

The Re: Fashion Awards show is a brand new fashion phenomenon, set to transform social and environmental standards in the fashion industry within a decade. The RE:Fashion Awards will take place in London in November 2008. The glittering event will see major faces from the fashion world come together to recognise the most significant development in the fashion industry of the 21st century. The deadline for budding fashion designers to enter their contest is August 20th.

Website: http://www.refashionawards.org/

Aphotogallery of the cocoa fashions:

here: Photogallery 1
and here: Photogallery 2

And a video of Mai making the garments here: Video

Ethical Fashion Show: Isabelle Quehe, who established the event, said "You almost never see designers from developing countries doing shows in Paris, so this brings together natural products, local fair labour, respect for the environment and finding sales outlets in Paris." Potential designers and exhibitors can contact the Ethical Fashion Show by sending collection photos and a brief explanation on how the fashions contribute to the ethical fashion movement.
Send contributions to: 4, rue Trousseau 75011 Paris

Email: unilove@wanadoo.fr

 Once inspired to get into the global fashion business, check out this business website for all the latest news, jobs and events

Website: http://us.fashionmag.com/news/index.php

- Acreative agency specialising in the promotion of African culture to the world. They organise RUNWAY AFRICA—Africa's
 annual Fall Fashion Show featuring five of Africa's most promising rising design stars on the runway.
 Website: http://inspirationafrica.org/aboutus.html
- Green fashion must really be making an impact—the BBC, Britain's venerable public broadcaster, has started an on-line fashion magazine. Called Thread. Fashion Without Victim, it is dedicated to bringing the "latest of eco-fabulous style".
 Through a "unique mix of affordable fashion, exclusive videos, photo galleries and thought-provoking features" the site is committed to promoting all aspects of ethical fashion.

Website: http://www.bbc.co.uk/thread/

 Traidcraft fights poverty through trade, helping people in developing countries to transform their lives. Established in 1979 as a Christian response to poverty, we are the UK's leading fair trade organisation.

Website: http://www.traidcraftshop.co.uk/default.aspx

Window on the World

Mesh Collaboration: Creating New Business Value in the Networks of Everything

by Andy Mullholland and Nick Earle, Publisher: Evolved Technologist.

--The book helps companies understand how to thrive and grow in a fast moving, ultracompetitive, globalized world, by using the new Web 2.0 networking tools.

Website: http://www.amazon.com

A Community Guide to Environmental Health

by Jeff Conant et al, Publisher: Hesperian Foundation.

--This highly-illustrated guide will help health promoters, educators, community leaders and ordinary people take charge of their communities' environmental health.

Website: www.amazon.com

■ The End of Food: The Coming Crisis in the World Food Industry

by Paul Roberts, Publisher: Bloomsbury.

-With an insightful global approach, Paul Roberts investigates the startling truth about the way we make, market, consume, and even think about food, and how this system is no longer compatible or safe for the billions of consumers that it was built to serve.

Website: http://www.bloomsbury.com/

• Eat Your Heart Out: Why the Food Business is Bad for the Planet and Your Health

by Felicity Lawrence, Publisher: Penguin

Website: www.penguin.co.uk

■ The Places We Live

by Jonas Bendiksen, Publisher: Aperture

-Ongoing exhibition of photos at the Nobel Peace Center, Oslo, Norway

Website: http://www.aperture.org/tpwl/

Just Another Emperor?: The Myths and Realities of Philanthrocapitalism

by Michael Edwards, Publisher: Demos.

-Business involvement in philanthropy is increasing day by day, but is it a blessing, a curse, or somewhere in between? Just Another Emperor? is the first book to take a comprehensive and critical look at this vital new phenomenon. Whatever position you take, this will be one of the most important debates of the next 10 years.

Website: http://www.justanotheremperor.org/

 UNCTAD's 2008 Report on the Least Developed Countries: Growth, Poverty and the Terms of Development Partnership

Website: www.unctad.org

■ WTO's World Trade Report 2008: Trade in a Globalizing World

Website: www.wto.org

Funky Business Forever: How to Enjoy Capitalism

by Jonas Ridderstrale and Kjell Nordstrom

Website: www.amazon.com

African Blog Round-up

Blog Aggregators

Afrigator

Aggregator of African blogs, including blogs focused on ICT4D, advocacy, etc.

Language: En

Africa &ICT

Aggregated blogs about Africa&ICT @ Wordpress

Language: En

<u>Amatomu</u>

South African blog aggregator featuring also "technology" category

Language: En

Blogging Africa - Pambazuka News

News service on African blogs on all types of issues related to social justice in Africa

Language: En

Inexhaustive list of African blogs and web 2.0 sites

on Kabissa.org wiki Language: En

Blogs

3wan.net

Blog by Ewan Sutherland on (also African) telecoms and regulations.

Language: En

Africa Blog

Blog on issues related to HIV/AIDS and ICTs in Africa, handheld computers in development, ICT4D, PDA's for development, poverty, telecoms for development.

Language: En

AfriGadget

Solving everyday problems with African ingenuity - One of the blog's sections is dedicated to communication technology Language: En

Auka Blog

Aluka blog - Building a digital library of scholarly resources from and about Africa

Language: En

Anything ICT and Open Source

Blog by Ghanean ICT and open source activist and enthusiast Charles Amega-Selorm

Language: En

APC Blog - English

Blog of The Association for Progressive Communications APC

Language: En

Beer, Coffee, and a Little DSP

Blog by David Rowe whose company is specialising on development of low cost wireless and other networking solutions

Language: En

Changing Journalism

 ${\bf Blog}\ by\ a\ Kenyan\ blogger\ Rebecca\ Wanjiku,\ writing\ on\ Journalism,\ ICTs,\ digital\ villages,\ etc$

Language: En

Clement Nyirenda's Blog World

Clement Nyirenda's blog on technology and its use in the fight against poverty

Language: En

CodeZed

Blog by (and for) People passionate about technology and even more passionate about technology in Zambia.

Language: En

Upcoming Events

September

13th World Water Congress

Montpellier, France (1-4 September 2008)

--The Congress will provide an excellent forum to meet, discuss and network on water-related issues at the national, regional and global levels. Leading international water experts and policy-makers are being specially invited to discuss the latest developments on different aspects of water management from different parts of the world, and synthesize knowledge in terms of what is being implemented, where and why.

Website: http://www.worldwatercongress2008.org/

West Africa Peacebuilding Institute (WAPI) 2008

Accra, Ghana (1-19 September 2008)

-The West Africa Peacebuilding Institute (WAPI) is a three-week course offered annually by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). It is designed to strengthen the capacity of civil society-based peacebuilding practitioners and institutions across the West Africa sub-region and beyond and aims to promote the development of indigenous responses to conflict. According to the organisers, WAPI was established to provide specialised, intensive, and culturally sensitive training in conflict transformation and peacebuilding to individuals, civil society organisations (CSOs), policy-makers, and other relevant actors.

Email: wapi@wanep.org
Website: www.wanep.org

African Carbon Forum

Dakar, Senegal (3-5 September 2008)

--Responding to calls for more clean development mechanism (CDM) projects in Africa and growing carbon market interest in the continent, partner UN agencies and the International Emissions Trading Association (IETA) will organize a carbon forum in Senegal under the umbrella of the Nairobi Framework.

Website: PDF Document

• 8th Asia Pacific Roundtable for Sustainable Consumption and Production

Cebu, Philippines (18-20 September 2008)

-APRCP's approach is to promote technology and information exchange, and to encourage cooperation and partnerships among government, industry, academic institutions and non-governmental organizations. APRCP's mission is to provide leadership and support that will enhance information flow and human resource development, and will strengthen public-private partnership to stimulate the promotion and implementation of cleaner production strategies and technologies in the region.

Website: www.aprscp.org/roundtables/8th.htm

• CANCELLED! TEDAfrica: A gathering of the greatest thinkers and doers from Africa and the world

Cape Town, South Africa (29 September to 1 October 2008)

--What if Africa had no borders? What if her boundaries extended as far as those living in the diaspora, or even further? What if you could fly directly from Cape Town to Cairo, Lagos to Luanda, Bujumbura to Abuja? Or what if you could drive to every city and every town and every village? What if the Internet was a reality for every African? What if you could call the world from atop the Kilimanjaro, or from deep in the forests of the Congo?

Website: tedafrica

2008 Global Youth Enterprise Conference

Washington DC, USA (15-16 September 2008)

-Making Cents International is excited to announce that the Global Youth Enterprise Conference will take place in Washington, DC September 15th-16th, 2008 at the Cafritz Conference Center. Designed as a participatory learning event, this conference aims to support youth enterprise and entrepreneurship programs and policies achieve greater effectiveness around the world. It will build on the outcomes of the first-ever Global Youth Microenterprise Conference, which Making Cents International organized for 270 practitioners, policymakers, educators, youth, and members of the private sector from 28 countries in September 2007. Making Cents is planning this year for 350 participants to share their promising practices, unique approaches, and groundbreaking ideas that help youth develop the necessary skills and opportunities to start their own businesses or seek quality employment. We invite you to submit a proposal, become a sponsor or exhibitor, and/or register!

Conference Agenda now published! We are pleased to announce our two keynote speakers:

- Dr. Imran Matin, Director of the Research and Evaluation Division and Director of Africa Programs, BRAC,
 Bangladesh
- Markus Goldstein, Office of the Director, Africa Region Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Division,
 World Bank

Email: conference@makingcents.com

Website: www.youthenterpriseconference.org

World Sustainable Building Conference

Melbourne, Australia (21-25 2008)

-The World Sustainable Building (SB) Conference series, held every three years, is the peak gathering of the world's leading technical experts and researchers on sustainable built environments. SB08 Melbourne will continue the traditional focus on technical developments and case studies. The main objective is to advance sustainability knowledge and practice through market and industry transformation.

Website: http://www.sb08melbourne.com/

■ Emission Markets India 2008

Mumbai, India (26-27 Sept. 2008)

--The objective of this event is to create awareness about CDM activity and attract the project developers and sellers to come and attend this meet and meet the buyers, banks and trading house of the carbon credit industry.

Website: http://www.tco2eindia.com/conference_detail.php?id=0

October

■ World Conservation Congress 2008

Barcelona, Spain (5-14 October 2008)

-Held every four years, the World Conservation Congress is one of the world's most important events devoted to improving our natural environment for human, social and economic development. More than 8,000 leaders from governments, NGOs, business, UN agencies, scientific domains and community groups are expected to attend.

Website: www.iucn.org/congress/2008/index.htm

Carbon Finance 2008

London, United Kingdom (9-11 Oct. 2008)

--This event will provide an in-depth update on the global carbon markets. Attend to hear top-level industry speakers give a full global carbon update - the outlook for the Kyoto process, recent legislation and emissions trading activity on an international level. Participate in nine brainstorming roundtable discussions, and numerous thought-provoking panel sessions

Website: www.environmental-finance.com

4th Kenya International Puppetry Festival

Nairobi, Kenya (10-18 October 2008)

-The Kenya International Puppetry Festival (KIPF) is a biennial puppet theatre event in East and Central Africa, showcasing a diversity of genres in puppet theatre as well as featuring performances and artistic workshops accessible to the public. According to the organisers, the overall goal of the festival is to promote puppetry as a performing art form, as well as a means of communication/education and social change. Emails: unima_kenya@myway.com; phylmono@yahoo.com

Website: http://www.comminit.com

■ MobileActive08

Johannesburg, South Africa (13-15 October 2008)

-Do you have expertise in the field of mobile technologies for social development? Are you a researcher with research findings to showcase about mobile technology for social impact? Are you a mobile service provider with specific products to exhibit that benefit the social market? If so, we invite you to submit your ideas to be part of MobileActive08! DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS: June 30

Website: http://e2ma.net

Social Capital Markets 2008

San Francisco, California (13-15 October 2008)

-Hundreds of leading social entrepreneurs and investors from around the world. Bringing together the people who are accelerating the flow of capital to good. Doing well and doing good is the mantra of a new generation of entrepreneurs

and the organizations that invest in them. And Social Capital Markets 2008 (SoCap08) is a new event designed to bring together all of the people and organizations with a similar deep passion to change the world through sustainable businesses.

Website: http://socialcapitalmarkets.net

Global Innovation Forum for Education and Development

Yerevan, Armenia (21-24 October 2008)

--The Global Innovation Forum for Education and Development provides a platform for several hundred young people across the globe to advance their causes toward achieving the MDGs through ICT. The forum is set to encourage young people to get engaged in, and develop and propose new ICT initiatives that innovatively advance local communities in various emerging regions.

Website: http://www.un-gaid.org

WEFTEC 2008

Chicago. USA (18-22 October 2008)

--The Water Environment Federation's Annual Technical Exhibition and Conference, is the largest conference of its kind in North America and offers water quality professionals from around the world with outstanding water quality education and training.

Website: www.weftec.org

■ BioMarine 2008

Marseille, France (20-24 October 2008)

-Biomarine is a worldwide initiative that helps nurturing innovative solutions to advance ocean sustainability, bringing together business, science, government, civil society and the media. This Forum is the official marine event of the French Presidency of the European Union.

Website: www.biomarine.org/

Pastoralism and Policy Options in East Africa 2008

Arusha, Tanzania (20-31 October 2008)

--According to the organisers of this workshop, MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation (MS-TCDC), pastoralists are among the most researched yet least understood groups in the world. Despite decades of empirical research, many policy makers, government technical staff, non-governmental organisation (NGO) and donor personnel, and the broader public do not fully understand the rationale and dynamics of pastoral livelihoods. The inability of pastoralists themselves to articulate the rationale of their livelihood system and the scope and scale of its benefits to the economy, the environment, and society further exacerbates their marginalisation. development of a common language and collective vision for a sustainable set of energy and transportation policies.

Website: http://www.comminit.com

ReThinking Transportation for a Sustainable Future

Louisville, KY, USA (28-29 Oct. 2008)

--This conference is designed to foster communication between academics and professionals working on energy and transportation issues, introduce new techniques and policies for energy and transportation sustainability and have attendees contribute to the development of a common language and collective vision for a sustainable set of energy and transportation policies.

Website: www.rethinkingtransportation.com

International Conference on Institutions, Culture, and Corruption in Africa

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (29-30 October 2008)

--The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) are hosting this conference on the causes and consequences of corruption in Africa. The conference forms part of activities being organised to mark the 50th anniversary of UNECA development of a common language and collective vision for a sustainable set of energy and transportation policies.

Website: http://www.pambazuka.org

November

CSR Asia Summit 2008

Bangkok, Thailand (3-4 November 2008)

--Amidst a growing call for companies to engage with CSR initiatives in Asia, the event is poised to explore hot topics unique to the Asian context, which would bring new insights for businesses, governments, NGOs and other CSR practitioners.

Website: http://www.csr-asia.com/summit08/

■ Fourth Session of the World Urban Forum

Nanjing, China (3-7 November 2008)

-The World Urban Forum was established by the United Nations to examine one of the most pressing issues facing the world today. rapid urbanization and its impact on communities, cities, economies and policies. It is projected that in the next fifty years, two-thirds of humanity will be living in towns and cities. A major challenge is to minimize burgeoning poverty in cities, improve the urban poor's access to basic facilities such as shelter, clean water and sanitation and achieve environment-friendly, sustainable urban growth and development.

Website: www.unhabitat.org

■ South Africa: The Power of Movements – <u>Announcement and call for proposals</u>

Cape Town, South Africa (14-17 November 2008)

-Up to 1,500 women's rights activists from around the world will gather to debate and strategize about how to build a stronger global women's movement. Proposals are sought for organizing a session.

Website: www.awid.org

Global Entrepreneurship Week

Around the world (17-23 November 2008)

-For one week, millions of young people around the world will join a growing movement of entrepreneurial people to generate new ideas and to seek better ways of doing things. Dozens of countries are coming together for the first time to host Global Entrepreneurship Week, an initiative to inspire young people to embrace innovation, imagination and creativity. To think big. To turn their ideas into reality. To make their mark.

Website: http://unleashingideas.org/welcome

ICT 2008

Lyon, France (25-27 November 2008)

-The next ten years will see major transformations in the technological, industrial and business landscapes surrounding information and communication technologies, or "ICT". ICT 2008 will set the agenda for ICT research and innovation in Europe during this crucial decade.

Website: http://www.un-gaid.org

Contest

Development Gateway Foundation photo contest. Prize: US \$1,000.

--The second annual Development Gateway photo contest begins this month. Go to the Web site to obtain information about how to submit your photos.

Website: http://www.dgfoundation.org

Training Opportunities

Microenterprise and Development Institute New Hampshire 2008

Manchester, New Hampshire, USA (8-21 June 2008)

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN

--The MDI New Hampshire offers another highly relevant programme for microfinance and community development practitioners. The two-week programme presents 19 courses in three Knowledge Tacks: Microfinance, Pro-Poor Enterprise Development and Community Economic Development. Academic credit and Masters degree options are available.

Email: w.maddocks@snhu.edu
Telephone: 603-644-3124
Website: www.mdi-nh.org

ONGOING

■ The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MT), one of the USA's best known private universities, has made all 1,800 courses in its curriculum (environmental sciences, computer studies, physics...) available free on-line, using an open source system called OpenCourseWare (OCW). Each month, some 1.5 million surfers, most of them based outside the USA, follow the lessons and lectures in PDF, audio and video formats, some are also translated into French and Portuguese. MT is working with other universities to help them set up their own OCW.

Website: http://ocw.mit.edu/

Youth Financial Services Course: Emerging Best Practices

Washington DC, USA, (17-19 September 2008)

--Drawing from experts and experiences around the world this highly interactive course will provide participants with a comprehensive overview of current best practices and emerging lessons from those who are offering credit and savings products to youth.

The objective of this course is to provide practical information that will assist youth-serving organizations when deciding which service and delivery mechanisms are most appropriate for their youth populations and program objectives. This is aimed at decision-makers of youth-serving organizations and others who are interested in offering youth financial services to their respective youth populations.

Click the link for the registration form: registration.

Grameen Bank Microcredit Training Programs

Grameen Info

The Citizen Journalism in Africa Programme

--The Hivos/SANGONeT Civil Journalism in Africa Project aims at building the capacity of civil society organisations to use online and offline citizen journalism as a means of publication, lobby, networking and knowledge sharing with their constituencies. The focus will be on both traditional and new media. Special attention will be given to the development of sound and ethical journalistic, lobby, networking and publication skills. Supported by the European Union, the project will be implemented over the next three years.

http://www.citizenjournalismafrica.org/

■ The Grassroots Reporting Project

-One of our goals at AfriGadget (http://www.afrigadget.com/) is to find more stories of African ingenuity. The Grassroots Reporting Project is our plan to find, equip and train more AfriGadget reporters in the field throughout Africa. AfriGadget's goal is to leverage the power of current and emerging technology such as video cameras, digital cameras, laptops and phones to bring quality content online and eventually on television. Acombination of mobile phones and computers will be assigned to individuals in 10 African countries for the purpose of getting more on-the-ground reporting of stories of African ingenuity to the world. An AfriGadget editor will be in charge of identifying the best candidates for inclusion in the program. This editor will also travel to each country to train and equip the new AfriGadget reporters for the program.

Website: http://www.afrigadget.com/

Preparation for the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra: Switzerland supports blog on ownership

-In the run-up to the 3rd High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, which will take place in Ghana in September, the governments of Switzerland and Colombia have launched a blog on the World Wide Web as a platform for discussion on the topic of "Country Ownership". The two countries are co-chairs of the roundtable which focuses on this issue.

Website: www.whoseownership.org

CAREERS

New Website Offers Career Advice to Young Africans

-Set up by the Commonwealth Secretariat, Africancareerguidance.com is aimed at providing career guidance to African youth and helping them to link with prospective employers. AfricaRecruit is a human resources organisation that provides skills training for African professionals in the Diaspora and on the continent. The website has an inbuilt email subscriber list for all its users and offers a searchable database of career profiles for job seekers and prospective employers. It also offers skills and interest assessments and advice on CV and résumé preparation. It provides tips about interviewing techniques, as well as information on internship and volunteer opportunities, and entrepreneurial skills

Website: www.africacareerguidance.com

FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Africa Entrepreneurship Platform

--This ground breaking initiative is created as a forum to showcase innovative ideas and businesses from Africa that have the ability to scale internationally driving job creation and sustainable economic development between Africa and the Americas.

Website: www.sacca.biz

Piramal Foundation in India

-Has established a US \$25,000 prize for ideas that help advance full access to effective public health care in India. The Piramal Prize is a \$25,000 Social Entrepreneurship Competition focused on democratizing health care in India that seeks to encourage and support bold entrepreneurial ideas which can profoundly impact access to higher standards of health for India's rural and marginalized urban communities. The award recognizes high-impact, scalable business models and innovative solutions that directly or indirectly address India's health-care crisis.

Website: www.piramalprize.org

■ The Pioneers of Prosperity Grant and Award

-This competition is a partnership between the OTF Group and the John F. Templeton Foundation of the United States, and promotes companies in East Africa by identifying local role models that act as examples of sustainable businesses in their country/region. It is open to businesses from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and Rwanda.

Five pioneers will receive US \$50,000 to re-invest in their business. It is open to for-profit businesses that provide high wages to their workers and that operate in sustainable ways.

Website: Pioneers of Prosperity

African Writers Fund

--Together with the Ford Foundation, the Fund supports the work of independent creative writers living on the continent. The Fund recognizes the vital role that poets and novelists play in Africa by anticipating and reflecting the cultural, economic and political forces that continuously shape and reshape societies.

Website: http://www.trustafrica.org

Joint NAM S&T Centre - ICCS Fellowship Programme

-Centre for Science and Technology of the Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (NAM S&T Centre) and International Center for Chemical Sciences (ICCS), (H.E.J. Research Institute of Chemistry and Dr. Panjwani Center for Molecular Medicine and Drug Research), University of Karachi, Karachi, Pakistan

 Email:
 namstct@vsnl.com;

 namstct@bol.net.in;

 apknam@gmail.com;

Website: http://www.scidev.net

Oxford Said Business School Youth Business Development Competition

-Open to youth between 16 and 21 across the world, the competition is run by students at Oxford University to promote

social enterprise. A prize fund of £2,000 in seed capital is up for grabs. It calls itself the 'world's first global youth development competition'.

Click here for more information

US\$250,000 for Best Lab Design

--AMD and Architecture for Humanity have announced a prize of \$250,000 for the best design for a computer lab that can be adapted and implemented in third-world countries.

The Open Architecture Prize is the largest prize in the field of architecture and is designed to be a multi-year program that will draw competition from design teams around the world.

Website: http://www.openarchitecturenetwork.org/

PhD Plant Breeding Scholarships at the University of Ghana

The <u>University of Ghana</u> has been awarded a project support grant by the <u>Alliance for a Green Revolution</u> in Africa (a joint venture between the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation, for the establishment of a West African Centre for Crop Improvement (WACCI). This is available to scientists working at NARIs, universities and international centres in West Africa. Women scientists are especially encouraged to apply for a fellowship under this programme.

Website: http://www.acci.org.za

Institute of Social Studies in The Hague

-Acollaboration between 25 international think tanks in international development, www.focuss.info is a search engine for indexing and social book marking online resources in international development.

Website: http://focuss.info/

• Genesis: India's Premier Social Entrepreneurship Competition

-A social entrepreneurship competition aiming to bring together social entrepreneurs, students, NGOs, innovators, incubators, corporations and financiers and encourage them to come up with innovative ideas which are socially relevant and feasible.

Website: http://genesis.iitm.ac.in/

Echoing Green: Social Entrepreneurs Fund

-They are looking for social entrepreneurs developing new solutions to social problems. They are accepting applications for their 2008 fellowships (two-year funding of up to US \$90,000 for 20 entrepreneurs.

Website: http://www.echoinggreen.org/

2008 Sustainable Banking Awards

-The Financial Times, in partnership with IFC, the private sector arm of the World Bank Group, today launched the 2008 edition of the FT Sustainable Banking Awards, the leading awards for triple bottom line banking.

Two new categories - Banking at the Bottom of the Pyramid, and Sustainable Investor of the Year - have been added to the ground-breaking programme.

The awards, now in their third year, were created by the FT and IFC to recognise banks that have shown leadership and innovation in integrating social, environmental and corporate governance objectives into their operations.

Website: http://www.ifc.org

FUNDING

UNESCO: International Centre for South-South Co-operation in Science, Technology and Innovation

-The International Centre for South-South Co-operation in Science, Technology and Innovation was inaugurated in Kuala Lumpur in May 2008. The centre functions under the auspices of UNESCO. It facilitates the integration of a developmental approach into national science and technology and innovation policies, and provides policy advice. In parallel to organizing capacity-building and the exchange of experience and best practices, the centre conducts research and tackles specific problems in science, technology and innovation policy-making in developing countries.

Website: www.unesco.org

Funding - Google.org

--While SMEs in rich countries represent half of GDP, they are largely absent from the formal economies of developing countries. Today, there are trillions of investment dollars chasing returns – and SMEs are a potentially high impact, high return investment. However, only a trickle of this capital currently reaches SMEs in developing countries. Our goal is to increase this flow.

We want to show that SMEs can be profitable investments. We will do this by focusing on lowering transaction costs, deepening capital markets to increase liquidity, and catalyzing capital for investment. Website: www.google.org

Challenge InnoCentive

-Achallenge to the world's inventors to find solutions to real scientific and technological problems affecting the poor and vulnerable.

Website: http://www.innocentive.com/

You can read more about the challenges here: http://www.rockfound.org

Global Social Benefit Incubator: A US \$20,000 Bottom of the Pyramid Scholarship

--Offered by Santa Clara University's Global Social Benefit Incubator, it selects 15 to 20 enterprises from developing countries and provides an eight-month mentoring process. This ends with a 10-day process in Santa Clara, where entrepreneurs work with their mentors.

Website: www.socialedge.org

Job Opportunities

- Africa Recruit Job Compendium
- Africa Union
- CARE
- Christian Children's Fund
- ECOWAS
- International Crisis Group
- International Medical Corps
- International Rescue Committee
- Internews
- IREX
- Organization for International Migration
- Oxfam

- Relief Web Job Compendium (UN OCHA) (1)
- Relief Web Job Compendium (UN OCHA) (2)
- Save the Children
- The Development Executive Group job compendium
- <u>Trust Africa</u>
- UN Jobs
- UNDP
- UNESCO
- UNICEF
- World Bank
- World Wildlife Fund (Cameroon)

Please feel free to send your comments, feedback and/or suggestions to Cosmas Gitta [cosmas.gitta@undp.org] Chief, Division for Policy, Special Unit for South-South Cooperation